

VZCZCXRO1884

OO RUEHAG RUEHDA RUEHDF RUEHFL RUEHIK RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHLN RUEHLZ
RUEHROV RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHVI #0610 0591558
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 281558Z FEB 06
FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2533
INFO RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1098
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA IMMEDIATE
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS VIENNA 000610

SIPDIS

SIPDIS, SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR OES/IHA, EUR/AGS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KFLU](#) [ASEC](#) [TBIO](#) [SENV](#) [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [WHO](#) [AU](#)

SUBJECT: AVIAN FLU: EU HEALTH MINISTERS AFFIRM NEED FOR
COORDINATED PUBLIC OUTREACH

REF: A) VIENNA 488 (B) VIENNA 470

¶1. (SBU) Summary: During a February 24 Informal Meeting on the "Impact of Avian Influenza on Public Health in Europe," EU Health Ministers stressed the importance of public awareness. Austrian Health Minister Maria Rauch-Kallat pointed to the need for more public outreach, noting the Presidency had developed a series of information sheets on its website. EU Commissioner Markos Kyprianou called for a calm approach, noting that authorities had effectively implemented containment strategies in affected areas. Rauch-Kallat stressed there is no risk in eating poultry, announcing poultry would be the main course for the ministers' lunch. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On February 24, EU and EU Candidate Health Ministers, EU Commissioner Markos Kyprianou, and the WHO Regional Manager met in Vienna to discuss the latest developments on the spread of avian influenza in Europe. According to the Austrian host, Health Minister Maria Rauch-Kallat, the meeting aimed to coordinate strategies to contain risks of further infections and "to conduct proactive and transparent information policy to the public."

¶3. (SBU) The meeting turned out to be more of a public affairs event to calm public concerns over the spread of the disease than a working session to identify new measures to battle the disease. Rauch-Kallat emphasized that consumption of poultry products is safe. To highlight her point, she announced that poultry would be the main course at lunch.

¶4. (SBU) Rauch-Kallat also highlighted the importance of public outreach in helping to educate the public to avoid risky behavior. To address this issue, a series of information sheets are available online on the Presidency's website. In addition to a general information sheet, there are separate sheets targeted at the following groups identified to be at higher risk: schools, travelers, physicians, poultry farmers, veterinarians, and hunters.

¶5. (SBU) During a press conference after the meeting, EU Commissioner Kyprianou noted that procedures to fight avian flu had worked well. For example, in areas where there is risk of poultry infection, authorities had implemented containment strategies (culling, keeping poultry indoors, a three kilometer protection zone, a 10 kilometer surveillance zone, and a trade ban). Kyprianou did not answer questions on the need to vaccinate poultry. According to media reports, Member States are still split on this issue, with Austria opposing vaccinations. Asked about further measures in risk areas, Kyprianou said, "We cannot kill every bird coming from areas suspected as source regions," such as the

Danube Delta. The EU Commission has earmarked 20 million Euros for research on avian flu and is drafting a "white paper" to discuss further action.

MCCAW#